

Public Notice

U S Army Corps of Engineers

Huntington District Stream: Right Fork Seng Camp Creek

Closing Date: November 11, 2005

Please address all comments and inquiries to: U.S. Army USACE of Engineers, Huntington District

ATTN: CELRH-OR-F Public Notice No. (reference above)

502 Eighth Street

Huntington, West Virginia 25701-2070 Phone: (304) 399-5710

In reply refer to Public Notice No. 199800436-3 Issuance Date: October 12, 2005

PUBLIC NOTICE: The purpose of this public notice is to inform you of a proposal for work in which you might be interested. It is also to solicit your comments and information to better enable us to make a reasonable decision on factors affecting the public interest. We hope you will participate in this process.

REGULATORY PROGRAM: Since its early history, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has played an important role in the development of the nation's water resources. Originally, this involved construction of harbor fortifications and coastal defenses. Later duties included the improvement of waterways to provide avenues of commerce. An important part of our mission today is the protection of the nation's waterways through the administration of the USACE Regulatory Program.

SECTION 10: The USACE is directed by Congress under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 (33 USC 403) to regulate all work or structures in or affecting the course, condition or capacity of navigable waters of the United States (U.S.). The intent of this law is to protect the navigable capacity of waters important to interstate commerce.

SECTION 404: The USACE is directed by Congress under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344) to regulate the discharge of dredged and fill material into all waters of the United States, including wetlands. The intent of the law is to protect the nation's waters from the indiscriminate discharge of material capable of causing pollution and to restore and maintain their chemical, physical and biological integrity.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The following application has been submitted for a Department of the Army Permit under the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This notice serves as the USACE request to the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to act on Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the following application.

APPLICANT:

Hobet Mining, Inc. 7 Players Club Drive

Charleston, West Virginia 25311

LOCATION: The proposed project would be located in the in East District of Logan County, West Virginia at Latitude 38°52'39" and Longitude 81°47'52" on the United States Geological Survey 7.5-minute Clothier and Amberstdale Quadrangles. The proposed project would result in disturbances to the Right Fork of Seng Camp Creek, Pigeonroost Branch, Oldhouse Branch and unnamed tributaries of Pigeonroost Branch and Oldhouse Branch. The streams on-site exhibit surface water connections to Spruce Fork, which flows into the Little Coal River, which ultimately flows into the Coal River, a navigable (Section 10) water of the U.S.

PROJECT HISTORY: The proposal was originally advertised by Public Notice Number 199800436, issued by this office on June 29, 1999. The applicant at that time proposed to impact 57,755 linear feet (12.84 acres) of waters of the U.S. and 2,914 acre of land to recover 51.53 million tons of bituminous coal reserves. The applicant has since revised the configuration of their proposed mine plan in accordance with the requirements of the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) Final Approximate Original Contour (AOC) Guidance Document, developed in accordance with the U.S. District Court <u>Bragg vs. Robertson</u> Consent Decree, reduced proposed impacts to waters of the U.S. by 13,809 linear feet (3.89 acres), reduced surface disturbances by 636 acres, reduced coal extraction by 10.62 millions tons, and eliminated the use of a dragline, which would result in a reduced amount of unreclaimed disturbed acres at any given time during mining.

NEPA HISTORY: A notice of intent to prepare a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed project was published in the Federal Register on February 4, 2000. A public scoping meeting was held at the Chief Logan State Park on May 2, 2001. Numerous interagency scoping meetings have been conducted over the last four years. The DEIS in currently being revised by the USACE and will be available for public review in the near future. A notice of availability for the DEIS will be published in the Federal Register upon its completion. The DEIS will be made available for public review a minimum of 15 days prior to conducting a public hearing. The applicant's revised project is summarized below.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED WORK: The applicant proposes to place dredged and fill material into approximately 8.95 acres of waters of the U.S., including 0.12 acre of emergent wetland, 10,630 linear feet (1.83 acres) of ephemeral streams, and 32,491 linear feet (6.81 acres) of intermittent streams, and 825 linear feet (0.019 acre) of perennial streams, in conjunction with the continued construction, operation and reclamation of the Spruce No. 1 Surface Mine [Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) Permit S-5013-97, Incidental Boundary Revision 2]. The proposed Spruce No. 1 Mine permit area would result in a total surface disturbance of approximately 2,278 acres of land, of which 1,170 acres would consist of the mineral extraction areas, over a 15-year life of the mine. Of this total, approximately 500 acres would be disturbed for surface mining at any one time, based on sequential backfilling and concurrent reclamation of the mine areas. The proposed project would include mining of an average of 2.73 million tons of bituminous coal annually via mountaintop removal mining methods with incidental contour, auger and highwall extraction for a period of approximately 15 years.

The proposed mineral extraction operations would generate nearly 501 million cubic yards of spoil material. Nearly 391 million cubic yards of this material would be placed on the mined area with the remaining excess 110 million cubic yards stored in the six proposed valley fills. Construction of the proposed valley fills would result in the permanent placement of approximately 18,401 cubic yards of dredged and fill material into 24,023 linear feet of intermittent streams, 7,655 linear feet of ephemeral streams, and 0.12 acre of emergent wetlands. The proposed valley fills would affect contributing watershed areas of 55.67 acres to 526.03 acres. Additionally, the removal of bituminous coal reserves underlying stream beds would result in the discharged of 34 cubic yards of dredged and fill material into 2,161 linear feet of intermittent stream segments and 2,945 linear feet of ephemeral stream segments of Pigeonroost Branch and its 2nd and 4th unnamed tributaries, 1st unnamed left tributary of the 4th unnamed tributary, 3rd unnamed right tributary, 1st unnamed left and right tributaries of the 3rd unnamed tributary, Oldhouse Branch, and 1st unnamed left and right forks of Oldhouse Branch. Construction of the proposed drainage control structures and associated erosion protection zones would result in the temporary placement of approximately 2,587 cubic yards of dredged and fill material into 825 linear feet of perennial streams, 5,642 linear feet of intermittent streams and 30 linear feet of ephemeral streams. Lastly, the construction of the proposed office and maintenance area would result in the placement of approximately 358 cubic yards of fill material into 315 linear feet of the 1st and 2nd unnamed intermittent tributaries of Pigeonroost Branch. Table 1 and Table 2 attached to this public notice summarize the proposed activities and corresponding impacts. According to the applicant, the purpose of the project is to recover the bituminous coal reserves from the 6-Block, 5-Block, Stockton, and Coalburg coal seams. To accomplish this, the applicant proposes to construct, operate and reclaim the Spruce No. 1 Mine. Reserves from the project site would be sold on the market to satisfy a currently high demand for coal. Plans for the proposed Spruce No. 1 Mine are attached to this public notice. The current revision (Incidental Boundary Revision 2) was approved by the WVDEP on April 26, 2005, with the corresponding National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit modification approved on April 29, 2005.

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS: This project is not considered to be water dependent; therefore, the applicant is required to show that other less damaging practicable alternatives are not available that would achieve the overall project purpose. No permit will be issued until our review of the alternative analysis clearly shows that upland alternatives are not available to achieve the overall project purpose.

MITIGATION PLAN: The applicant conceptually proposes to create approximately 26,361 linear feet (5.5653 acres) of ephemeral and intermittent streams on-site by modifying and enhancing post-reclamation surface channels that run along the perimeter of the mined and reclaimed area, restore 7,132 linear feet (1.2282 acres) of ephemeral and intermittent streams on-site temporarily affected by the proposed activities, enhance off-site 8,772 linear feet (11.3114 acres) of Spruce Fork, rehabilitate and enhance off-site 2,500 linear feet (3.2719 acres) of Rockhouse Creek, and create on-site 0.48 acre of emergent wetlands. These proposed mitigation channels would be designed and constructed utilizing natural stream design techniques. A 50-foot vegetative riparian zone, consisting of native herbaceous, shrub and tree species, would be established along the created, enhanced and restored channels.

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: A Section 401 Water Quality Certification is required for this project. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain certification from the WVDEP.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES: The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) has been consulted and it has been determined there are no properties currently listed on the register that are in the area affected by the project. A Phase I survey was completed for the proposed project. Seven historic Euro-American residential sites (46GL116, 125-130), three Euro-American cemeteries (46GL 131-122), and single Euro-American petroglyph (46GL 123) were identified within the floodplain of Pigeonroost Branch. The West Virginia Division of Cultural and History (SHPO) concurred with the Phase I survey findings in a letter dated November 5, 1997. A Phase II survey was completed on 46LG20. The SHPO concurred in a letter dated September 3, 1998 site 46LG20 was not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP. Sites 46LG123 and 46LG 131-133 would be avoided with a 100-foot buffer zone. Three buildings were identified near the mouth of Pigeonroost Branch. All three buildings were determined to not meet the minimum criteria for inclusion in the NRHP. The SHPO concurred with this determination in a letter dated November 5, 1997. A copy of this public notice will be sent to the SHPO for their review. Additional comments concerning archeological sensitivity of a project area should be based upon collected data.

ENDANGERED/THREATENED SPECIES REVIEW: Two federally listed endangered species, the Indiana bat (Myotis sodalis) and Virginia big-eared bat (Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus) may occur within the project area. Mist net surveys were completed within the proposed project area on two separate occasions during July 2000 and May 2004 in accordance with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Draft Indiana Bat Recovery Plan guidelines. No Indiana bats were captured during either of the survey efforts. The USFWS concurred with the latest survey in a letter dated April 8, 2005. Additionally, the proposed project area was investigated for the presence of open, abandoned portals or other features that could provide summer and winter habitat for the Virginia big-eared bat or hibernaculum for the Indiana bat. No portals or other features were identified within the proposed project area that provide habitat for these endangered bats. The USACE has determined the proposed project is not likely to adversely affect threatened or endangered species or their critical habitat. The May 2004 survey will be remain valid until May 15, 2007. Section 7 requirements under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) have been fulfilled. This public notice serves as a request to the Service for any additional information they may have on whether any listed or proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species may be present in the ESA Species Act of 1972 (as amended).

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW AND COMMENT: Any person who has an interest that may be adversely affected by the issuance of a permit may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer on or before the expiration date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest which may be adversely affected and the manner in which the interest may be adversely affected by the activity. This application will be reviewed in accordance with 33 CFR 320-331, the Regulatory Program of the USACE, and other pertinent laws, regulations, and executive orders. Our evaluation will also follow the guidelines published by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency pursuant to Section 404(b)(1) of the CWA. Interested parties are invited to state any objections they may have to the proposed work. The

decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; of those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. Written statements on these factors received in this office on or before the expiration date of this public notice will become a part of the record and will be considered in the final determination. A permit will be granted unless its issuance is found to be contrary to the public interest.

SOLICITATION OF COMMENTS: The USACE is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. For accuracy and completeness of the administrative record, all data in support of or in opposition to the proposed work should be submitted in writing setting forth sufficient detail to furnish a clear understanding of the reasons for support or opposition. Any comments received will be considered by the USACE to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this proposed project pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are used to determine the need for a public hearing. A public hearing will be held as part of the NEPA/EIS process. Comments are also used to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

CLOSE OF COMMENT PERIOD: All comments pertaining to this Public Notice must reach this office on or before the close of the comment period listed on page one of this Public Notice. If no comments are received by that date, it will be considered that there are no objections. Comments and requests for additional information should be submitted to Mrs. Teresa Spagna, Project Manager, South Regulatory Section, CELRH-OR-FS, USACE Huntington District, 502 Eighth Street, Huntington, West Virginia 25701-2070. Please note names and addresses of those who submit comments in response to this public notice become part of our administrative record and, as such, are available to the public under provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Thank you for your interest in our nation's water resources. If you have any questions, you may contact Mrs. Teresa Spagna of the South Regulatory Section at (304) 399-5710.

Ginger Mullins, Chief Regulatory Branch

6 Table 1

Spruce No. 1 Mine Summary of Activities in Waters of the United States

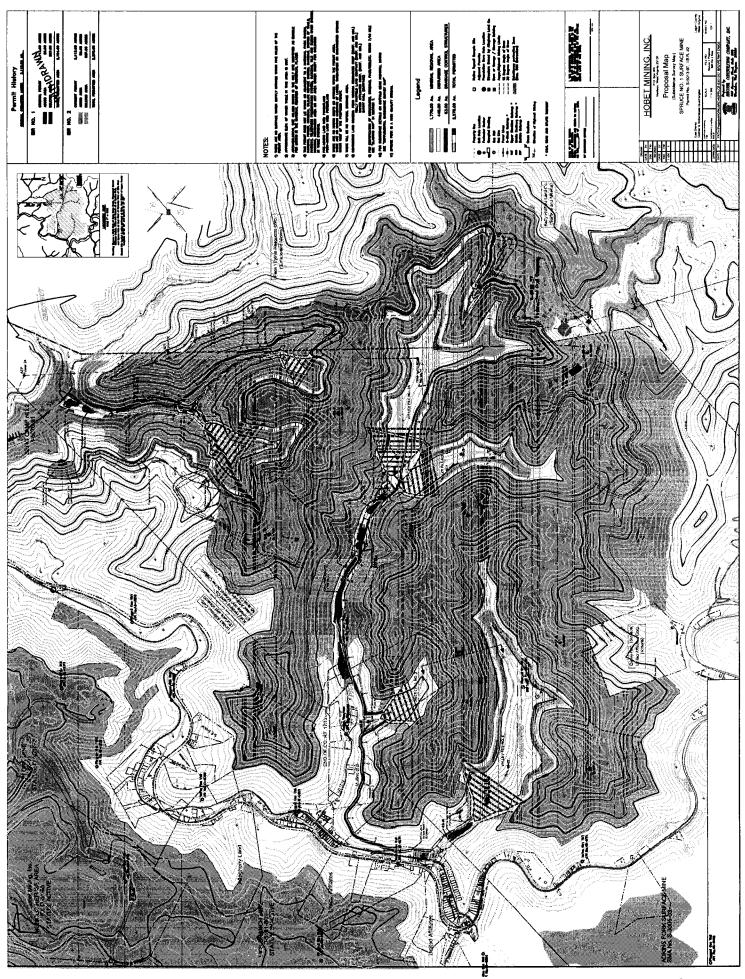
Structure I.D.	Size of Fill (Acres)	Jurisdictional Volume of Fill (Cubic Yards)	Total Volume of Fill (Million Cubic Yards)	Contributing Drainage Area (Acres)
Valley Fill No. 1A	63.70	1465.28	11.82	164.13
Valley Fill No. 1B	17.76	169.44	1.53	55.67
Valley Fill No. 2A	223.70	5844.66	39.30	475.84
Mine Through Area	N/A	34.04	N/A	N/A
Valley Fill No. 2B	65.38	3400.41	13.85	296.05
Valley Fill No. 3	29.00	1154.17	3.43	131.34
Valley Fill No. 4	163.19	6333.04	40.07	526.03
EPZ - Valley Fill Nos. 2A & B	2.69	291.23	N/A	N/A
Pond No. 2	2.88	656.11	N/A	1,167.50
Pond No. 2A	1.83	189.06	N/A	1,167.50
Office Area Fill	N/A	358.31	N/A	1,167.50
Pond No. 2B	1.29	258.33	N/A	1,167.50
Pond No. 2C	2.18	510.56	N/A	1,167.50
Pond No. 3	0.12	225.28	N/A	143.60
Pond No. 4	1.61	456.60	N/A	591.70

Table 2 Spruce No. 1 Mine

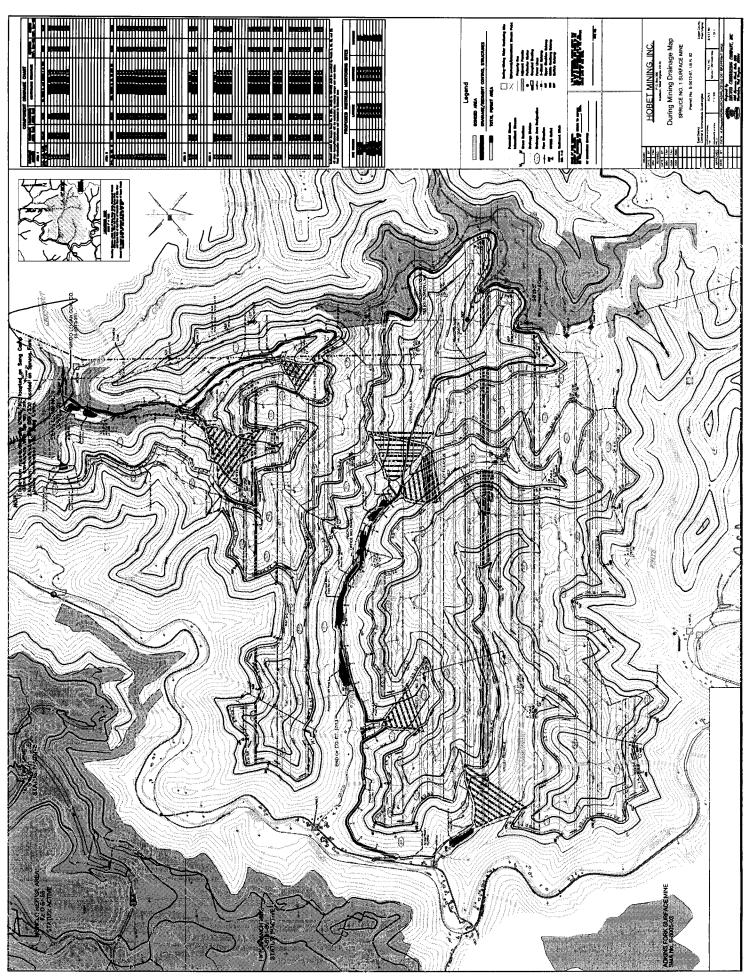
Summary of Permanent and Temporary Impacts to Streams					
Structure ID	Impact Area	Perennial Streams (feet/acres)	Intermittent Streams (feet/acres)	Ephemeral Streams (feet/acres)	Total Impacts (feet/acres)
Valley Fill No. 1A	1 st unnamed right tributary of Right Fork of Seng Camp Creek	0	1,950/0.4563	750/0.1010	2,700/0.5573
Valley Fill No. 1A	1st unnamed right tributary of 1st unnamed right tributary of Seng Camp Creek	0	700/0.0482	0	700/0.0482
Valley Fill No. 1B	2 nd unnamed right tributary of Right Fork of Seng Camp Creek	0	250/0.0264	500/0.0436	750/0.0700
Valley Fill No. 2A	Pigeonroost Branch – Segment 1	0	183/0.0168	0	183/0.0168
Pond Nos. 2, 2A, 2B, 2C and EPZ- 2AB	Pigeonroost Branch – Segment 1	0	5,287/0.8422	0	5,287/0.8422
Valley Fill No. 2A	Pigeonroost Branch – Segment 2	0	5,750/1.4506	0	5,750/1.4506
Mine Through Area	Pigeonroost Branch – Segment 2	0	350/0.0439	600/0.0298	950/0.0737
Office Fill Area	1 st unnamed left tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	225/0.0181	0	225/0.0181
Mine Through Area	2 nd unnamed left tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	108/0.0141	0	108/0.0141
EPZ-2AB	2 nd unnamed left tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	100/0.0109	0	100/0.0109
Valley Fill No. 2A	3 rd unnamed left tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	150/0.0164	0	150/0.0164
Valley Fill No. 2A	4 th unnamed left tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	50/0.0006	0	50/0.0006
Valley Fill No. 2A	4 th unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	2,800/0.5831	0	2,800/0.5831
Mine Through Area	4 th unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	25/0.0014	175/0.0057	200/0.0071
Valley Fill No. 2A	1 st unnamed left tributary of 4 th unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	1,225/0.2105	0	1,225/0.2105
Mine Through Area	1 st unnamed left tributary of 4 th unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	301/0.0563	0	301/0.0563

Structure ID	Impact Area	Perennial Streams (feet/acres)	Intermittent Streams (feet/acres)	Ephemeral Streams (feet/acres)	Total Impacts (feet/acres)
Valley Fill No. 2B	3 rd unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	4,500/1.0899	0	4,500/1.0899
Mine Through Area	3 rd unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	1,377/0.1226	0	1,377/0.1226
EPZ-2AB	3 rd unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	250/0.0669	0	250/0.0669
Valley Fill No. 2B	1 st unnamed left tributary of 3 rd unnamed tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	50/0.0052	510/0.0635	560/0.0687
Mine Through Area	1 st unnamed left tributary of 3 rd unnamed tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	0	340/0.0305	340/0.0305
Valley Fill No. 2B	1 st unnamed right tributary of 3 rd unnamed tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	0	530/0.0615	530/0.0615
Mine Through Area	1 st unnamed right tributary of 3 rd unnamed tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	0	270/0.0320	270/0.0320
Office Fill Area	2 nd unnamed tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	90/0.0083	0	90/0.0083
Valley Fill No. 3	1 st unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	1,860/0.4360	220/0.0410	2,080/0.4770
Pond No. 3	1 st unnamed right tributary of Pigeonroost Branch	0	355/0.0931	0	355/0.0931
Valley Fill No. 4	Oldhouse Branch – Main Stem	0	3,690/1.0859	3,370/0.8134	7,060/1.8993
Mine Through Area	Oldhouse Branch – Main Stem	0	0	30/0.0028	30/0.0028
Pond No. 4	Oldhouse Branch – Main Stem	825/0.1887	0	0	825/0.1887
Valley Fill No. 4	1 st unnamed left tributary of Oldhouse Branch	0	400/0.0413	0	400/0.0413
Valley Fill No. 4	2 nd unnamed left tributary of Oldhouse Branch	0	0	400/0.0505	400/0.0505
Valley Fill No. 4	1 st unnamed left fork of Oldhouse Branch	0	0	140/0.0269	140/0.0269
Mine Through Area	1 st unnamed left fork of Oldhouse Branch	0	0	360/0.0489	360/0.0489
Mine Through Area	1 st unnamed right fork of Oldhouse Branch	0	0	1,200/0.2250	1,200/0.2250

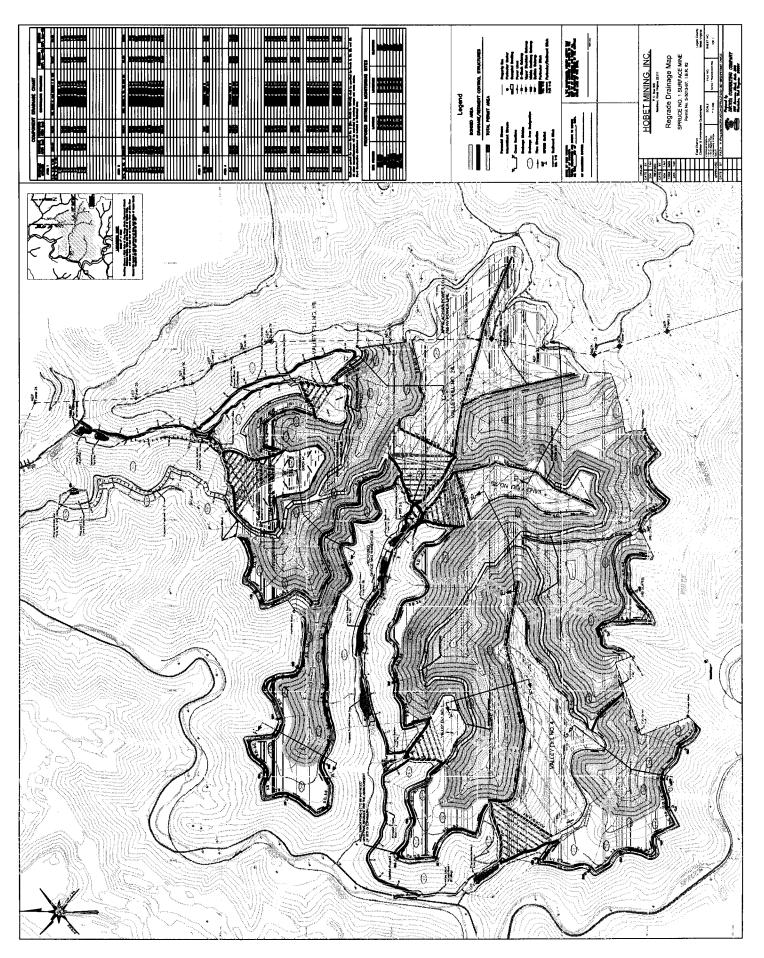
Structure ID	Impact Area	Perennial Streams (feet/acres)	Intermittent Streams (feet/acres)	Ephemeral Streams (feet/acres)	Total Impacts (feet/acres)
Valley Fill No. 4	2 nd unnamed right tributary of Oldhouse Branch	0	65/0.0187	1,235/0.2544	1,300/0.2731
Valley Fill No. 4	1 st unnamed right tributary of Oldhouse Branch	0	400/0.0494	0	400/0.0494
	Total	825/0.1887	32,491/6.8131	10,630/1.8305	43,946/8.8323

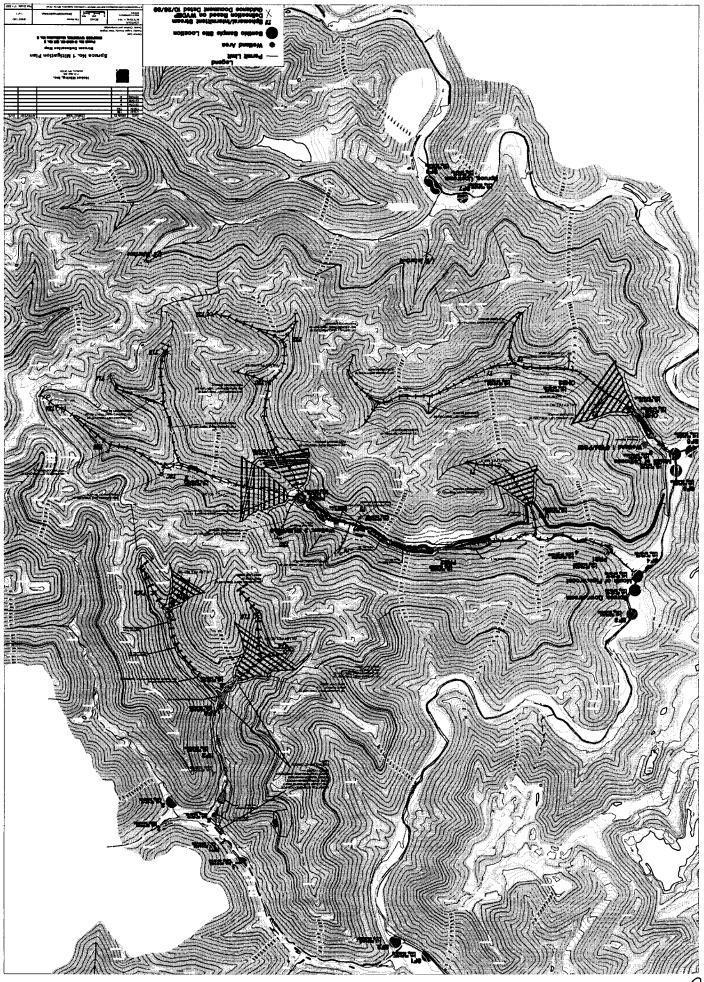


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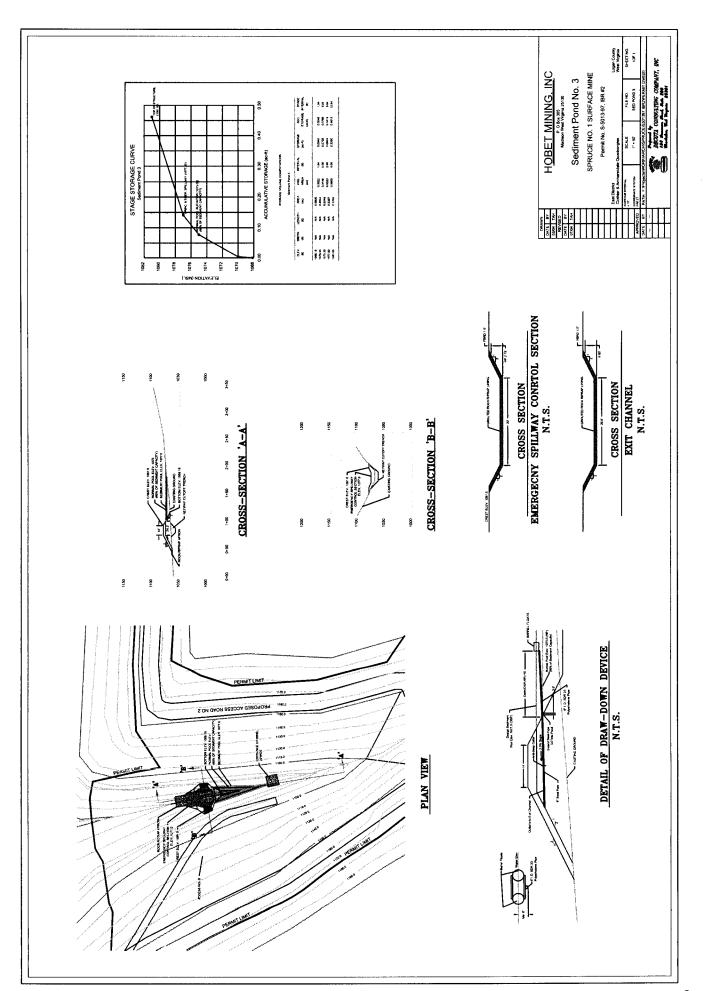


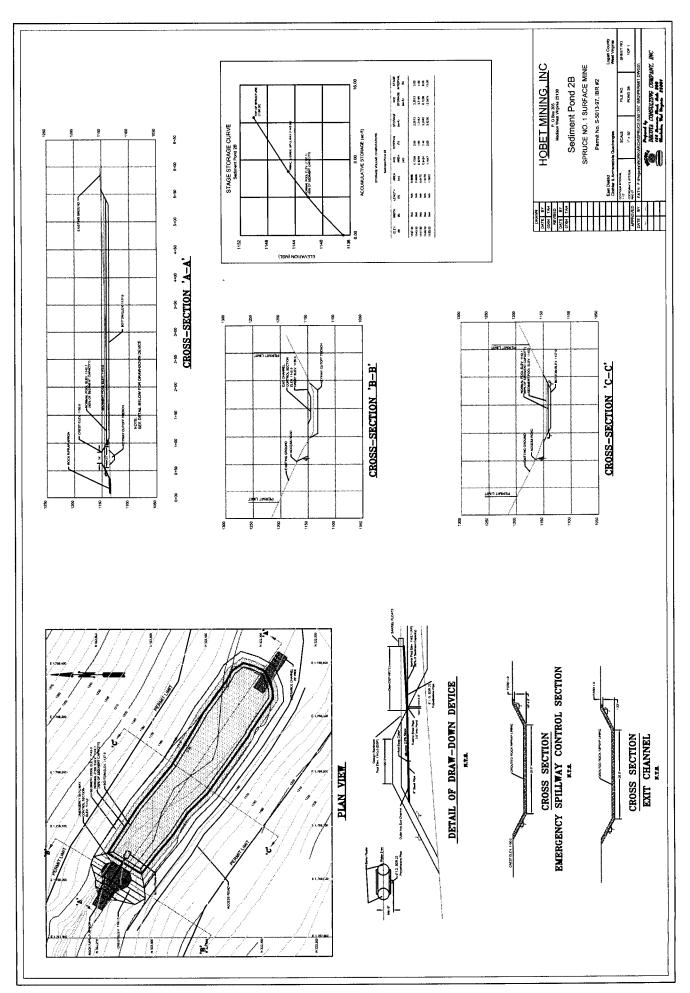
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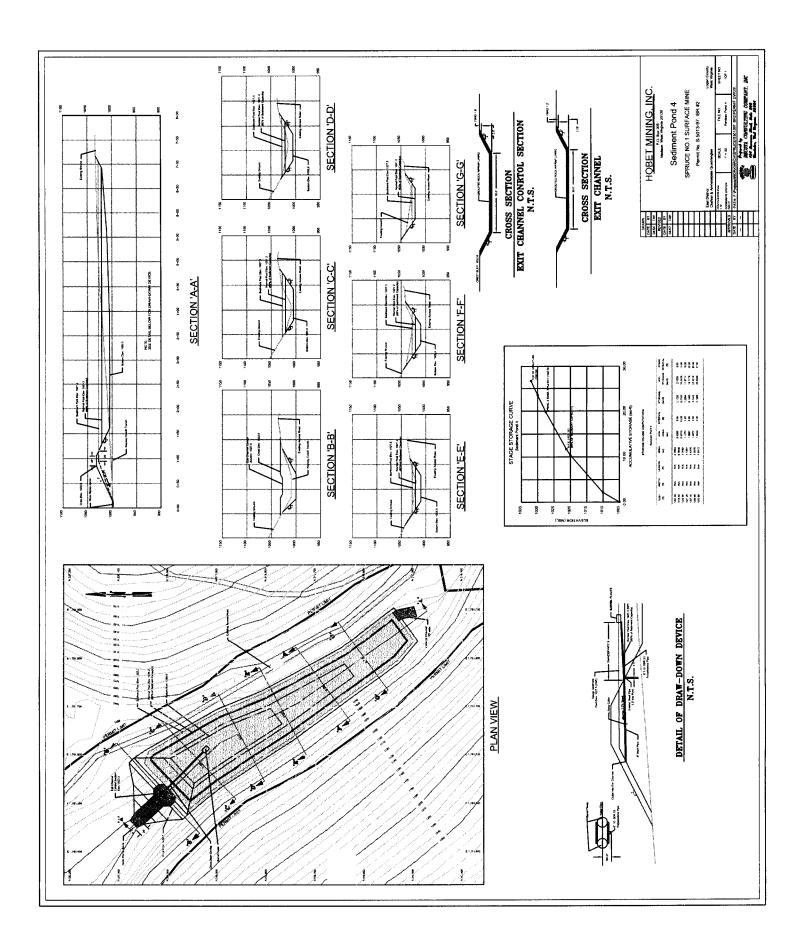


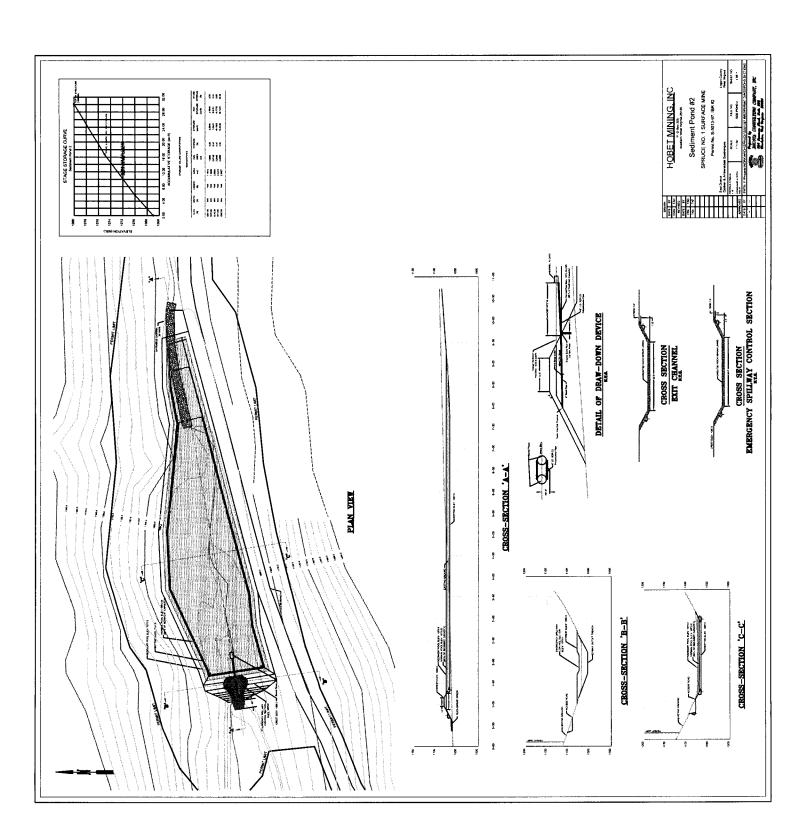


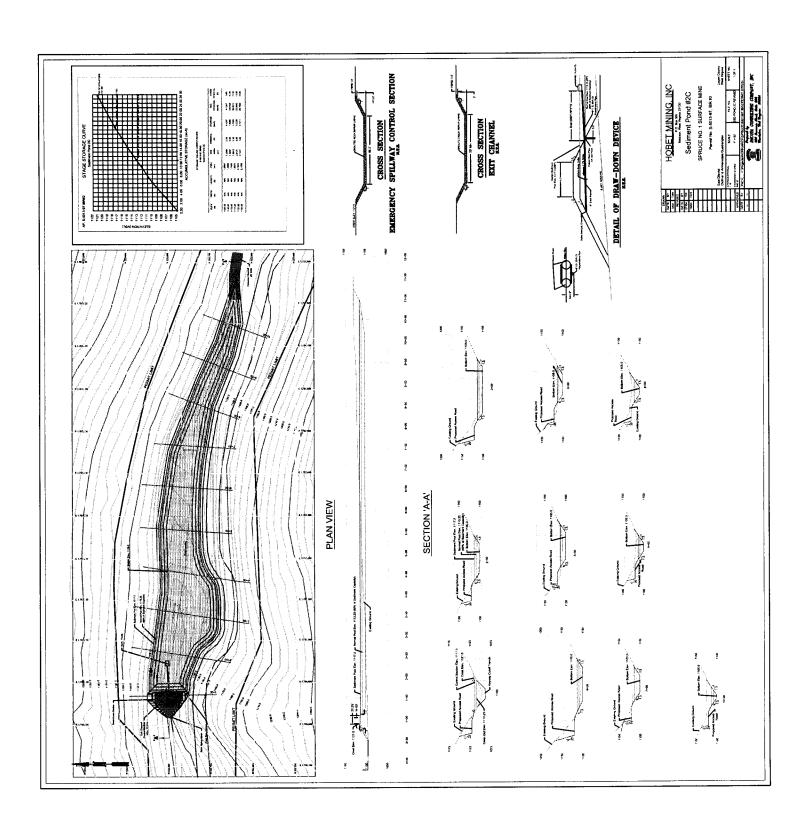
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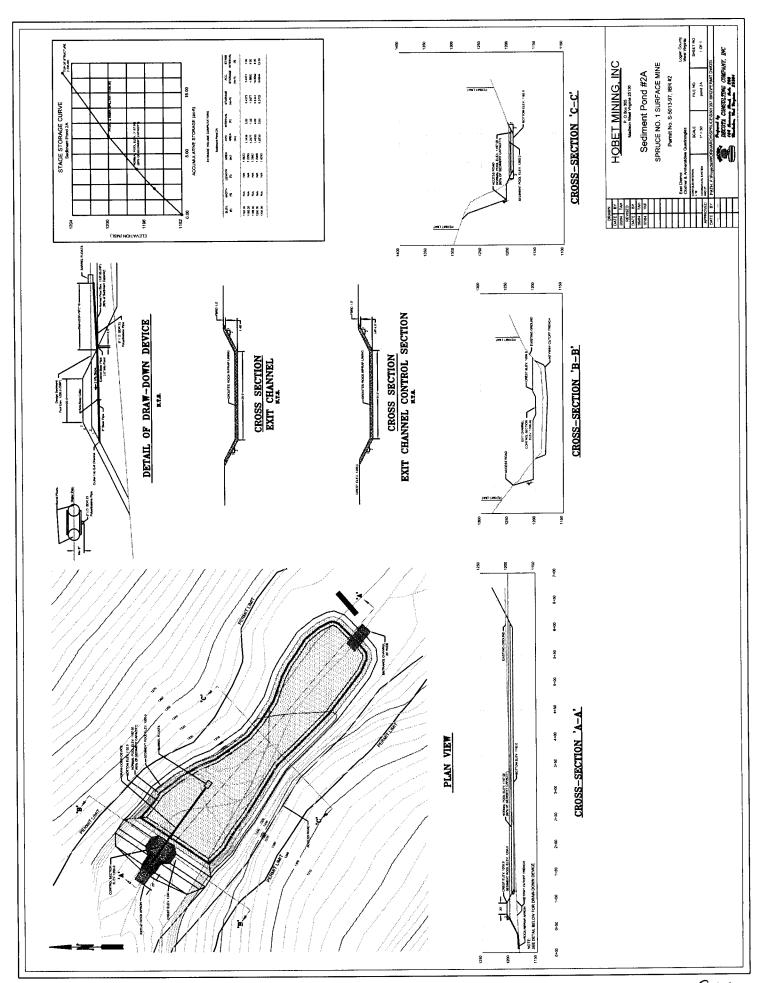


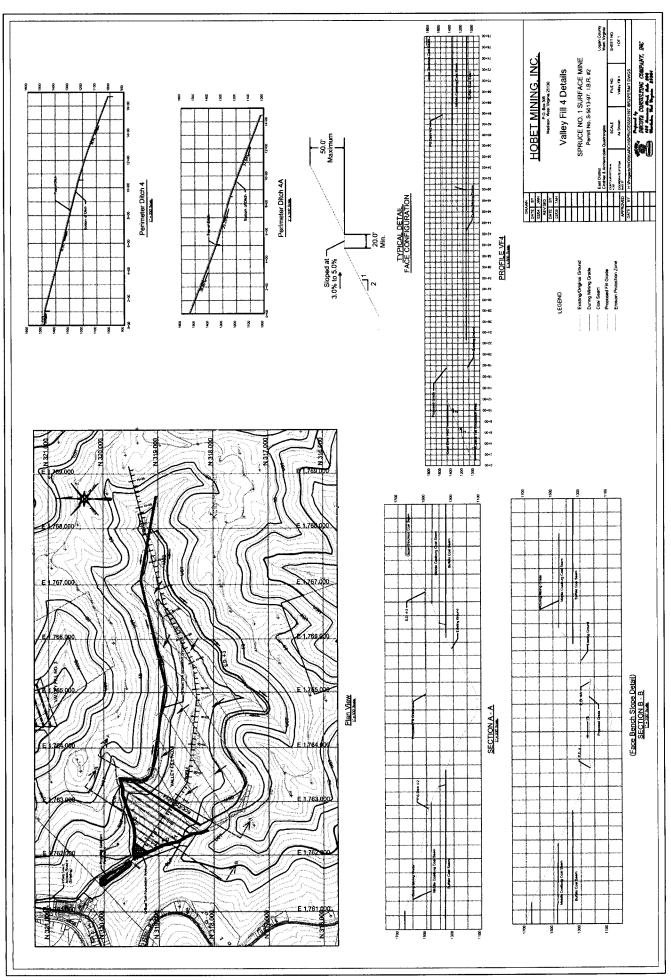




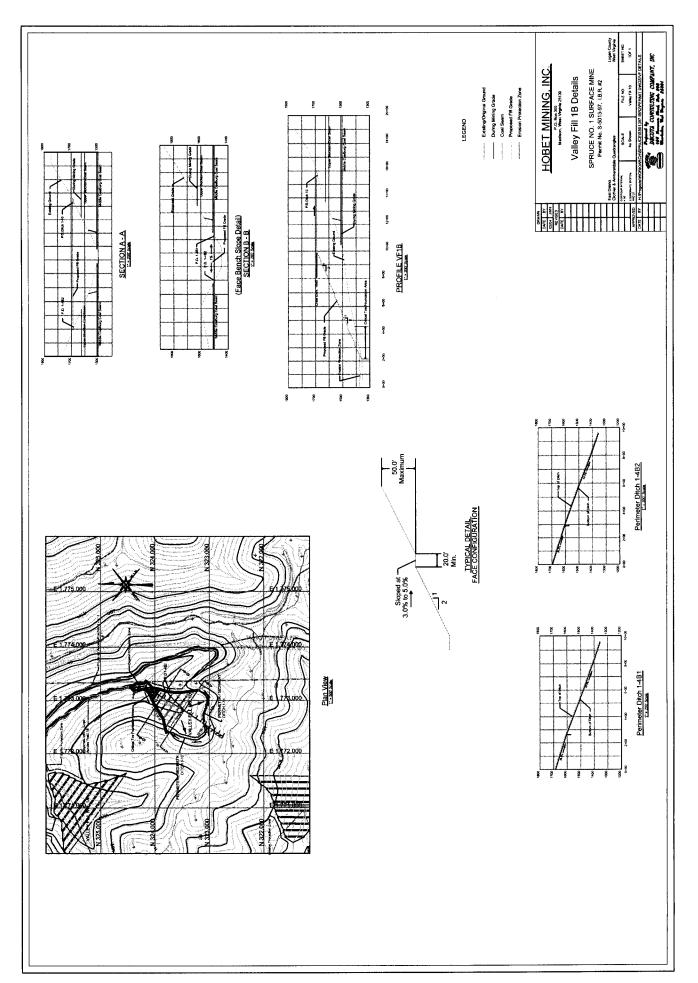


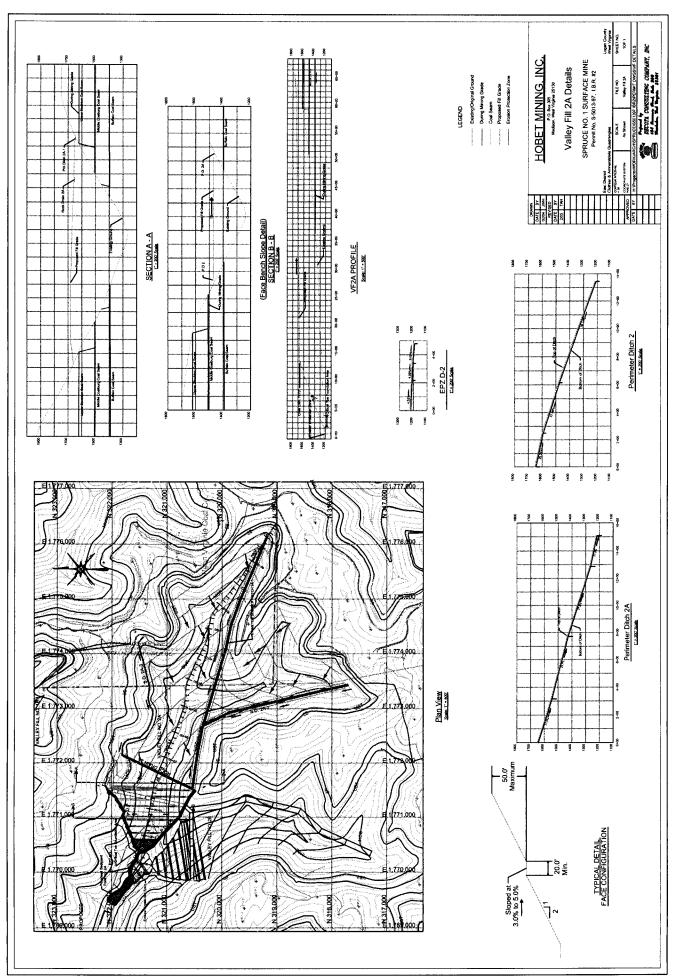




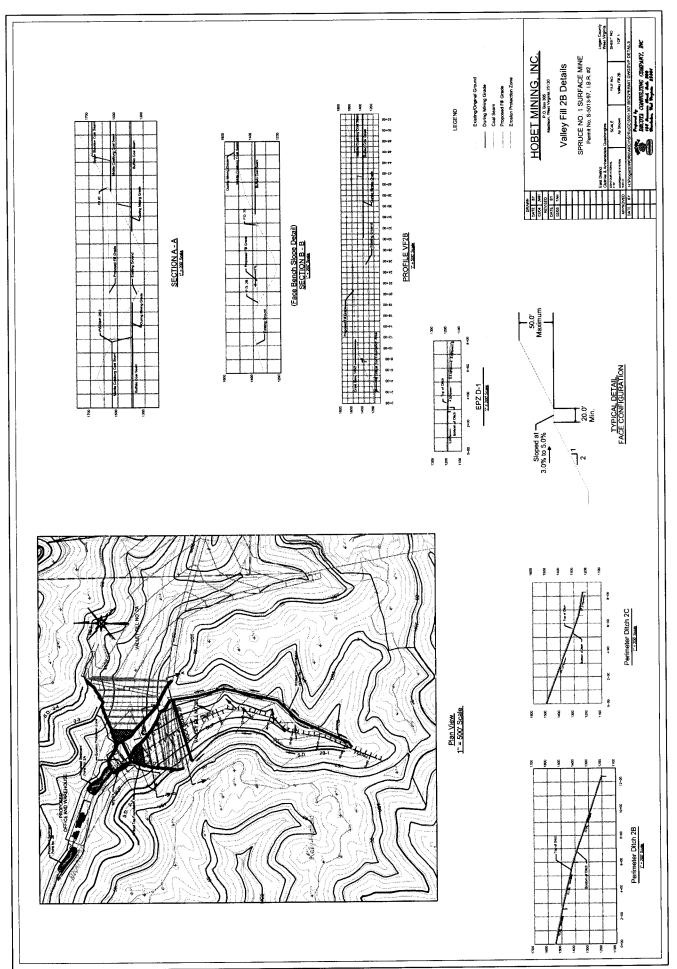


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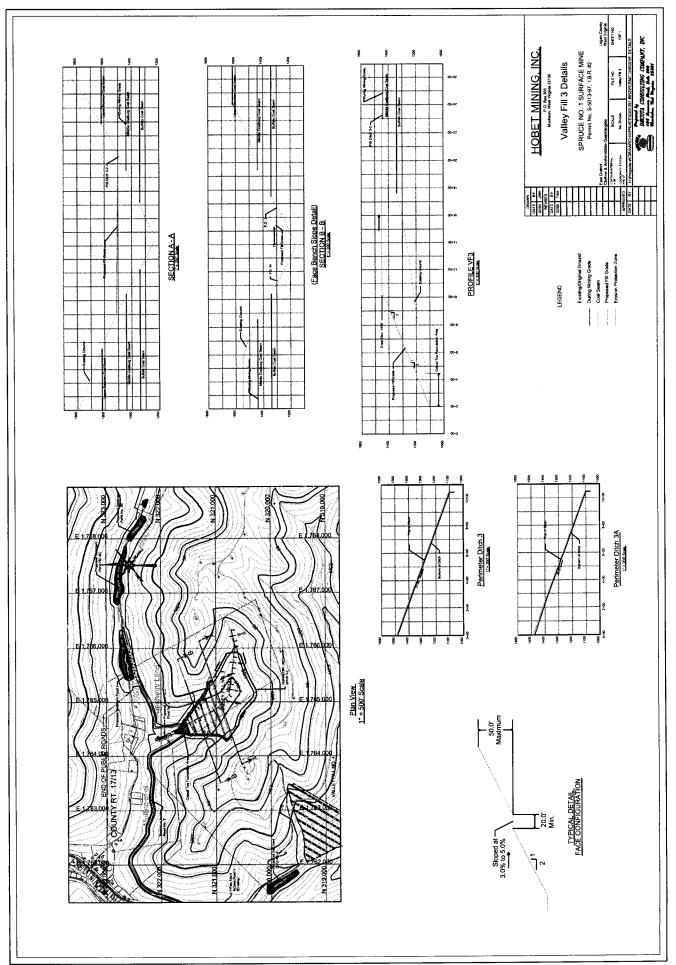




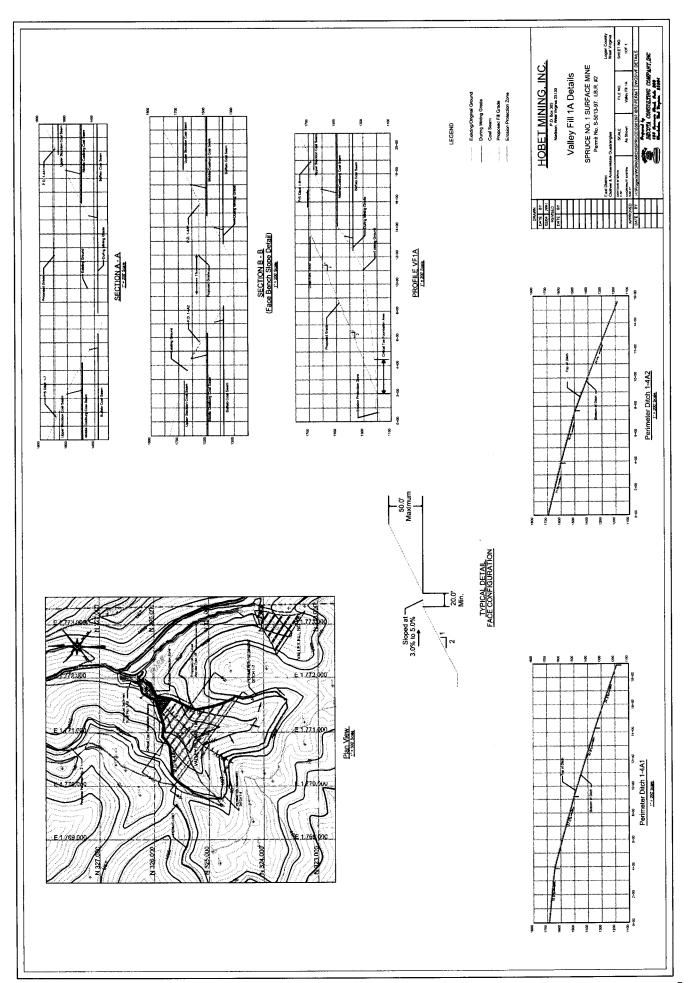
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